

SOUND (drawn from FILM ART by Bordwell and Thompson)

I. **Aesthetic uses of sound**

A. Sense modes appealed to

1. Visceral
2. Distance, space--sound effects, especially with multiple sound sources in theater
3. Mood--sound is primal to emotion, especially through rhythm and music

B. Narrative and connotative (often ideological) uses of sound

1. **Sound's finger-pointing function**

- a. anticipate
- b. shift our attention
- c. overlapping in editing=sound bridge
- d. clean-up and simplify the natural sound environment
 - i. ex. lower background sound when characters speak
 - ii. keep extraneous sounds out in shoot, trip over cable, hand on cable or moving thumb on mike, use of mic stand, shoot in early am before traffic
- e. silence as dramatic punctuation

2. **Sound mix in editing**

- a. smooth flow in editing via sound bridge, change image in middle of a sentence rather than at falling inflection at end of sentence
- b. abrupt transitions in editing, ex. gun shot, for emotional impact
- c. use of silence as a punctuation mark

3. **Kinds of mics** in recording and their aesthetic functions

- a. directional or shotgun, cut out surrounding ambient sound, longer range, 'spy', similar to telephoto lens--need to be right on target
- b. omni or omni directional--all of surrounding sound, except when used as tieclip mic
- c. cardioid, heart shaped pick-up pattern, some background sound, rather directional, good documentary shooting mic

II. **Acoustic properties--loudness, pitch, timbre**

III. **Dimensions of film sound**

- A. rhythm--speed and regularity --eg, beaters, guns, animal cries in rules of the game
- B. organic unity--relation to other elements
- C. fidelity--meets our expectations, kind of sound or volume

IV. **Diegetic space--story space of the film**

- A. on-screen or off-screen
- B. external (could see it) or internal (psychological only)

V. **Non-diegetic sound**--comment from outside the world of the story

- A. omniscient narrator
- B. background music

VI. **Story time, diegetic time, includes events we only hear about or**

infer

- A. sync or synchronous sound--see it produced on the screen, advantage and problem of video
- B. simultaneous sound--sound at same time as the image in terms of the story line
- C. displaced sound--from events or thoughts that come earlier or later in the story line than the events we actually see
 - 1. allows story events to be presented out of order
 - a. narrator tells what happened in past
 - b. hint of things to come
 - c. character's memories, visions (eg, psychological trauma films)
 - d. audio flash foreward or flash back.

TV SOUND AND IMAGE [drawn from VISIBLE FICTIONS by John Ellis]

I. Viewing conditions for theater vs those of television

- A. Me and the big screen
 - 1. anonymity, absorbed gaze in the dark, and "centered" view via seating
 - 2. separation from screen, from events on screen that proceed as if they were not watched, and the characters seem completely unaware of fact of an audience
 - 3. ritual aspect--going out, more like religion in terms of environment, something special
- B. Visual quality of film image
 - 1. larger than life, panoramas
 - 2. fine details, often a profusion of detail
 - 3. edge of frame used a lot
 - 4. visceral aspect of surround sound
 - 5. dramatic exploitation of sound in editing for narrative and for emotional impact

II. Viewing conditions for television

- A. Domestic environment
 - 1. social, especially family viewing
 - 2. move around in or out of room
 - 3. many hours spent watching, used a lot of times of day
 - 4. like a friend, whose voice you hear when out of room
- B. Viewer makes little effort in looking
 - 1. often little concentration, glance, do something else at same time
 - 2. lights on
 - 3. use of tv in hospitals
- C. Physical capacity for good sound. Since sets often have poor speakers and tacky sound, most programming is geared only for human voice range, little bass

III. TV image quality

- A. Less detail
- B. Smaller than "real" except for close ups

- C. We look down rather than up at screen
- IV. **Function of tv image, sound**
 - A. Image as illustration, follows sound
 - B. Voice-over commentary in news, ads, game shows, shopping channels
 - C. Sound anchors meaning
 - D. Image bears single most important detail for narrative line, music stresses that
 - E. Proliferation of talk shows
- V. **Effects of television sound and image**
 - A. Generate intimacy
 - 1. multiple camera shoot entails faster editing through switching vs rich image
 - a. it's still real time, with less temporal condensation than film narrative
 - b. tv uses many forms of direct address--group conversation, looking at camera, holding a conversation with us
 - 2. cu of announcer looking at camera, at us the viewers
 - 3. ads with direct address--questions, exhortations, warnings
 - 4. intertextuality provides in-group knowledge
 - B. Audio may be the most important aspect of television
 - 1. sound provides continuity when folks not watching
 - 2. image is always reduced in information value
 - 3. future of stereo sound
 - C. Broadcasting creates a perpetual present
 - 1. Soap operas present a constant family life, from one show to the next, all morning till about two pm. The soap operas are ever present, yet a series has to be seen on x date at x time or not at all, with passing and contemporary moments like life itself.
 - 2. MTV creates a small intimate community of viewers who are in the know.
 - 3. self-contained nature of television's segments
 - a. patterned segments within a whole, predictability of pace of day, of a program -- fitting into the housewife's day in daytime programming
 - b. daily programming on tv = present a predictable variety on a large scale
- VI. **Family**
 - A. TV has a supposed humanist sympathy with our concerns, especially around desire to be normal or psychologically healthful
 - 1. fictions use family; ads imply or use family
 - 2. tv's conventional plots and sets reproduce ideal or normative view audience has of itself
 - 3. Shows sometimes use "aberration" in family structure to reinforce the norm
 - 4. loved, familiar, excused figures on tv--Rosanne
 - 5. patriarchal figure of Pat Robertson
 - B. Family as ritual, tv as ritual
 - 1. locus of tv set in living room, kitchen, bedroom
 - 2. tv's segments relation to segments in household labor, no build, just repeated over

and over.

3 . housewife not a figure that seems "realistic"; not a news maker, use in drama and ads only